

2022 Annual Report

Seattle School Traffic Safety Committee

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Departure time at Washington Middle School -- Photo: Margaret McCauley



What is the School Traffic Safety Committee?

- Created by Ordinance in 1975.
- 11 members including:
- Seattle Public Schools (SPS)
- Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT)
- Seattle Police Department (SPD)
- King County Metro
- 5 volunteer positions filled by pedestrian advocates, bicycle advocates, parents, grandparents, and neighbors
- All meetings are open to the public. Please come and join us!

What does the Committee do?

- Mechanism for any community member to raise school traffic safety issues
- Uses SDOT data to recommend new school crosswalk locations and crossing guard assignments
- Reviews traffic circulation plans for new and renovated school buildings
- Updates elementary school walk boundary maps
- Works to improve crossing guard recruitment
- Connects SDOT, SPD, King County Metro, and SPS to improve collaboration on traffic safety issues

Families &
Community
Members



Seattle
Department of
Transportation



Top Needs for School Traffic Safety in 2022

Seattle Public Schools

- Reduce crossing guard vacancy rate from 39% to zero
- Comprehensively revise SPS Transportation Service Standards to include all students and all modes and to use current technology to improve planning and service

City of Seattle

- Revise City code to reflect education as the priority for school property
- Standardize SDOT requirements for school projects to focus on student safety
- Funding for SDOT sidewalk improvements to fill in gaps in Safe Routes to School

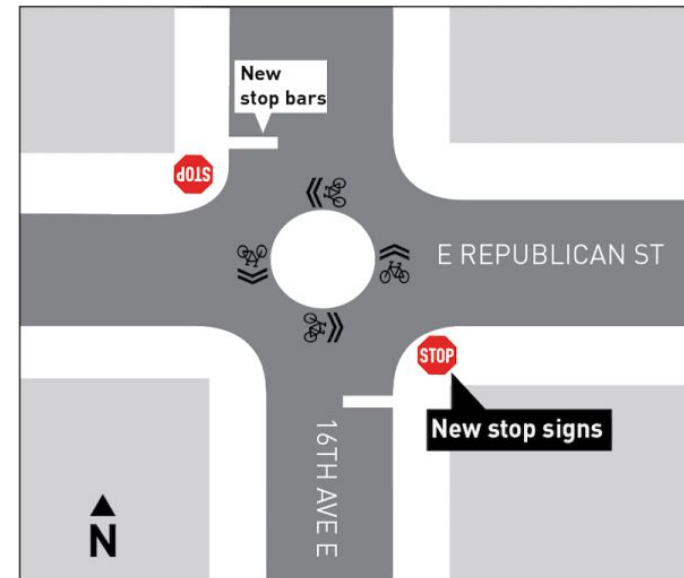


Photo: Margaret McCauley



A Big Win! Crosswalks & Stop Signs coming to corners near schools

- SDOT changed requirements for both 4-way stop signs and crosswalks, making them much easier to install around schools. Thank you!
- New school buildings are now allowed to build crosswalks in advance of opening
- SDOT has already begun installing stop signs at problem intersections around schools



New Police Rep on board!

We look forward to working with
Officer Davenport!



Photo credit Christopher Boffoli for West Seattle Blog as at

<https://westseattleblog.com/2012/09/if-you-wondered-why-those-seattle-police-motorcycles-went-by/>

Free Youth Transit Coming Soon

- All transit will be free for youth 18 and under starting on September 1st!
- STSC applauds the state's initiative in funding this program.
- SPS and Metro are in dialogue about how to get free ORCA passes to all students.



Another big win: School Streets program made permanent!

- Currently 14 blocks at 11 schools
- Allows for low stress walking, rolling, waiting, and mingling; big boost to building school communities through regular interactions
- It's easy for schools to apply!
- As it becomes familiar, expect more schools to enroll



Photo Source: Charlie Simpson

SPS Safe Routes to School Coordinator Sara Colling started in April – Expect great things!

- Thank you to the City for paying for the position.
- Thank you SPS for getting Sara on board.
- We look forward to supporting Sara as she focuses attention on 3 priority schools in the 2022-23 school year!

Whittier Elementary School Street after departure time. Photo: Margaret McCauley

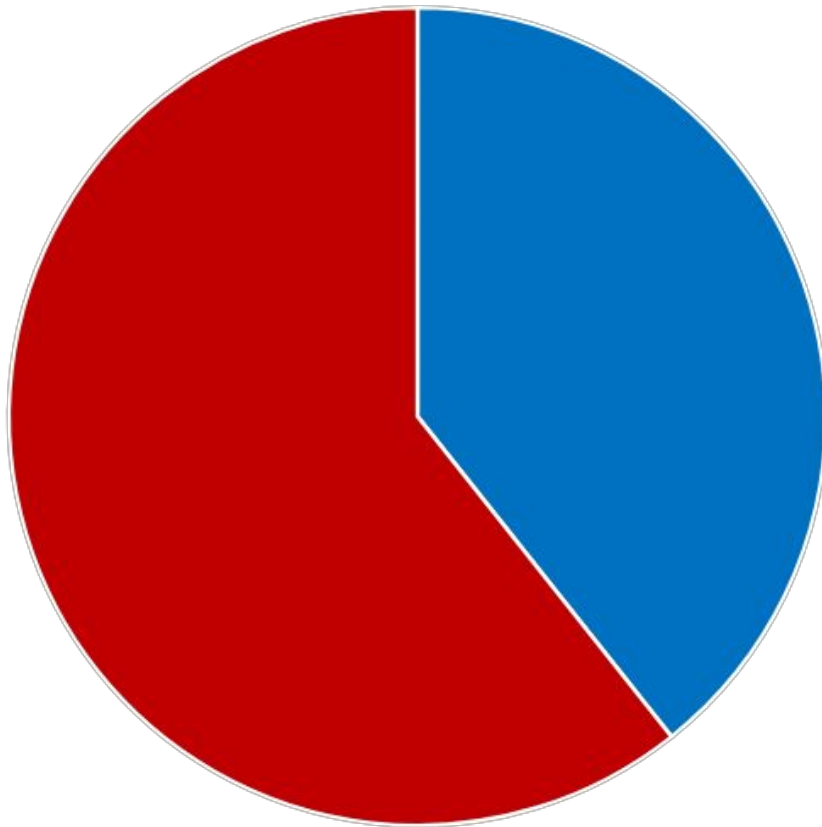


Now Some Challenges

(Usually not zombie related)



Crossing Guards as of June 2022 **update**



■ 46 locations need guards ■ 71 filled

39% of intersections already identified as too dangerous for kids to cross alone do not have a guard

- ❖ SPS pays for background check fees for most hourly staff, but not for crossing guards.
- ❖ A \$55 up front fee to become a crossing guard blocks or slows many of the interested people.
- ❖ The cost of fixing this oversight would be minimal, but the benefits to kids would be meaningful.

Opportunity: A Comprehensive Update to the Transportation Service Standards

Inclusionary Transportation: Families of special education students are eager to talk about how transport on general ed buses would mainstream students with their peers and save SPS substantial transportation costs.

Addressing all Modes: service standards currently only address busing.

Busing as a Learning Support: Including parameters to allow targeted busing to reduce truancy and habitual tardiness would make it possible to better serve students who struggle to get to school AND be reimbursed by the state for these costs.

Thurgood Marshall Elementary Departure includes bus, taxi, bike, walk, private car. Photo: Margaret McCauley



City Land Use Code for School Projects is Out of Date

City of Seattle code sections 23.51(b).002 and 23.54 require SPS to convert limited school property from play and education to car storage when renovating. Even if entire playgrounds were paved over, **there is literally not enough space on most sites to build the hundreds of parking spaces required by code.** Unrealistic requirements for building heights, bus circulation, and even signs require SPS to seek departures on nearly every project.

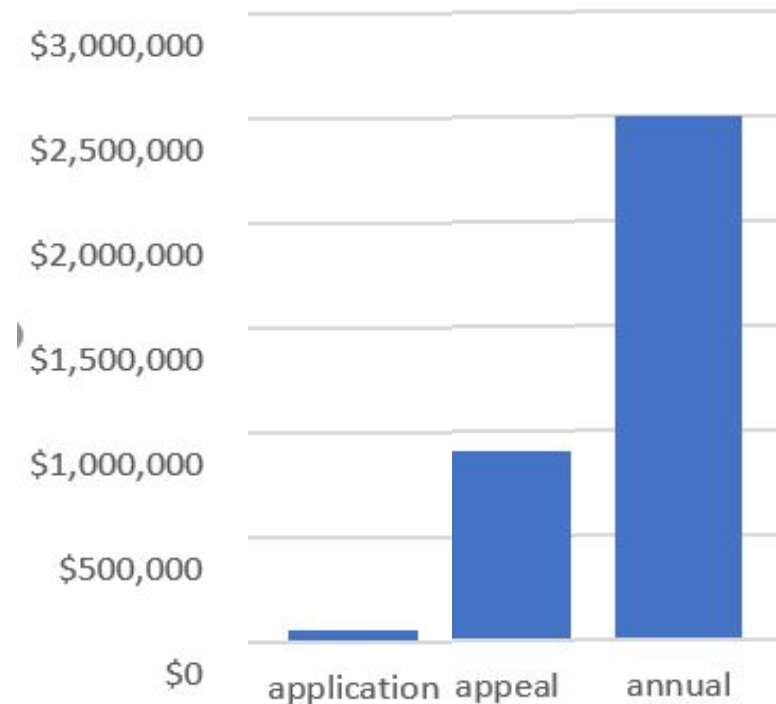
- Each departure process = \$50,000 in consultant fees + additional \$ for City staff time
- **Departures get appealed** - Average appeal delay costs 1% of the project. 1% of Northgate Elementary replacement = \$900,000
- **Current code wastes ~\$2.5 million of taxpayer money each year**



Each delayed project costs SPS enough to buy 2 new fully accessible playgrounds!



Photo: Margaret McCauley



SDOT SIP process should be focused on public benefits

- We ask SDOT to make a **'No Surprises' Commitment to SPS** so that requirements don't change when new staff take over a project.*
- SDOT should create a policy that **requires staff to focus on school traffic safety** when reviewing school construction projects.

*Recent conversation with SDOT has been promising. We hope to share positive news next year!



SDOT's Pedestrian Programs Need More Funding

- 2,400 blocks within ¼ mile of schools don't have sidewalks.
- SDOT builds about 25 blocks of sidewalks each year
- Half of SPS students are expected to get themselves to and from school each day.
- **A choice to prioritize sidewalk funding is also a choice to prioritize student safety.**



Working together to make Washington Middle departure time safe
Photo: Margaret McCauley

Summary: What can the School Board do to help?

- Initiate a Comprehensive Revision to the Transportation Service Standards.
- Let the City hear from you about updating code to eliminate habitual departures and filling in gaps in walking infrastructure around schools.
- Provide additional support to recruit, train, and manage crossing guards – **waiving background check fees would be a good start!**

Summary: What can the City Council do to help?

- Get active to find \$ to fill in gaps in walking routes to schools
- **Update City Code to eliminate habitual departures for SPS projects and protect school budgets**
- Direct SDOT to add effective physical markers for school streets
- Update SDOT policy to focus requirements for school projects on the needs of school communities



Photo credit: Seattle Neighborhood Greenways



We appreciate the opportunity to serve on this committee.

In 2022-2023 We look forward to continuing collaboration with Seattle Public Schools and the City of Seattle to help students get safely to school!